

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
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9. EXTENSION OF RANGE OF BROWN WOOD OWL, *STRIX*
LEPTOGRAMMICA

On June 6th 1980 during a visit to the summer palace of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa, at Norbulinka, a colleague picked up a secondary feather of an owl from the ground near the large pine trees growing outside the villa. Examination of this single feather which is fresh and in good condition confirms that it belongs to *Strix leptogrammica*, presumably of the subspecies *newarensis* which is recorded from as high as 4000 metres in the adjacent

Himalayan range to the south. This is a first record for Southern Tibet at an altitude of 3,822 metres (12,500 feet).¹ The presence of large trees and groves of willows, poplars, pines, junipers, elms, walnut, etc. in the neighborhood would provide an ideal habitat for such a medium-sized reclusive forest species, although the intervening distance from the Himalayan slope to the oasis of Lhasa would indicate infrequent exchange between the nearby populations in the Himalayas.

¹ (Ludlow F., Ibis, 1944, p. 373, reports seeing a species of *Strix* in conifer forest above Pe and on the Lusha La in S.E. Tibet, altitude over 3050 metre).

It would be interesting if local ornithologists would confirm the presence of such an owl in the Lhasa region.

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10. A NOTE ON THE FEEDING HABITS OF SWIFTS (APODIDAE:
APODIFORMES)

Certain species of swifts (Apodiformes) have been reported to be predaceous on a variety of insects (Ali and Ripley 1970). The present observations at two locations in Madurai district in South India indicate the possible role of these birds as natural controls during epidemics of certain types of insect pests and the possible impact of plant protection chemicals on the food of the birds.

In Oddenchatram area, there was a serious outbreak of the chilli white aphid, *Myzus per-*

sicae Sulzer. The incidence was fairly heavy and chemical control failed resulting in overcrowding and the formation of alates. It was during this stage that large number of the swift *Apus affinis* (J. E. Gray) were attracted to the aphid-infested fields. These house swifts were observed flying in flocks upto 30-50 hawking the flying aphids in the air. Their activity was continuously observed throughout the day until dusk.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

The apterous aphids were not picked directly from the plants.

At Madurai during a recent serious outbreak of the rice earhead bug, *Leptocorisa acuta* Thunberg, the palm swift, *Cypsiurus parvus* (J. E. Gray) was observed to feed on these bugs in large numbers. These birds were noticed to fly across the fields singly or in small groups of not more than 3-4 hawking the flying insects. Their activity appears to be high in the morning hours and decreased after 10.00 a.m. when the temperature here shoots up even in the months of January and February.

To combat the rice earhead bug, the dusting of BHC 10% and Carbaryl 10% was resorted to at 25 kg/ha. This treatment was noticed to drastically affect the activity of the palm swift, *C. parvus batasinensis* over the

treated area. A mean of as much as 318 sorties over an area of one acre was observed over a two hour period of observation in untreated plots whereas the treated plots could account for only 12 in case of BHC and 26 in case of carbaryl.

The observations indicate the possible potential of swifts in the natural control of specific pests in epidemics. The effective action of BHC and carbaryl and the reduction in flying insects is also evident from the counts of the birds hawking over treated and untreated fields.

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REFERENCE

- ALI, SALIM & RIPLEY, S. D. (1970): Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan. Vol. 4., pp. 25-60. Oxford University Press, Bombay.

11. GOLDEN ORIOLE *ORIOLOUS ORIOLOUS* FEEDING A FLEDGLING CUCKOO (*CUCULUS* SP.)

I observed a male Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* feeding a fledgling cuckoo. The oriole and the fledgling were sitting on a *Bridelia retusa* tree and the oriole fed the young cuckoo 5 times within 15 minutes, twice the berries of *Bridelia retusa* and thrice insects picked up from the foliage of the same tree. The fledgling cuckoo fluttered wings, called and crouched each time it received the food. While hopping from branch to branch in search of food

the oriole also called repeatedly. The cuckoo followed the oriole when it finally flew away. This observation was made at Betla Tiger Reserve, Palamau District, Bihar, North India on 19 September 1979 in the afternoon.

The young cuckoo was probably an Indian cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* or the Common Hawk-cuckoo *Cuculus varius*, both of which were quite common in that area.